

MINUTES
VIEUX CARRÉ COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, June 4, 2014 - 1:30 P.M.
City Council Chamber, City Hall - 1300 Perdido Street

PRESENT: Nick Musso, Vice-Chairman
Pat Denechaud, Secretary
C.J. Blanda
Leslie Stokes
Daniel Taylor
Alfred "Pio" Lyons
Jorge A. Henriquez

ABSENT: Michael Skinner

STAFF PRESENT: Lary P. Hesdorffer, Director; Gordon McLeod, & Sarah Ripple, Building Plans Examiners; Melissa Quigley, Assistant City Attorney.

STAFF ABSENT: Nicholas G. Albrecht, Building Inspector

OTHERS PRESENT: Ross Karsen, James Cripps, Morris Kahn, Sandra Stokes, Gail Cavett, Meg Lousteau, Robert Vanlangendonck

I. ROLL CALL

Acting Chairman Musso called the meeting to order at approximately 1:30 PM and, requested the roll call. Mr. Hesdorffer called the roll, noting the presence of a quorum with six members in attendance, which also requires five (5) favorable votes to pass any action.

II. REVIEW OF MINUTES from Vieux Carré Commission meeting of May 7, 2014

Mr. Hesdorffer noted that due to a technical complication with the video disk, the video, the minutes from the VCC May 7, 2014 meeting had not yet been completed or verified. Those minutes would be made available for review at the July 2, 2014 meeting.

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

In lieu of making a formal report, Mr. Musso noted that in recent weeks, the Commission's staff has been reviewing and exceptional number of a applications on the Architectural Committee agendas, noting that the most recent meeting had thirty-two (32) applications to consider. He noted the excellent analysis and level of detail which the staff had provided. Mr. Musso wanted to publicly acknowledge the efforts of Plans Examiners Gordon McLeod and Sarah Ripple along with Building Inspector Nick Albrecht.

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Hesdorffer noted that at the July meeting, the Commission will hold its annual election of officers. To be elected for regular offices of one year are the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary.

He also reported on the outcome of two other projects that had recently been before the Commission. In regard to 826-28 St Louis, where the VCC had denied the owner's request to retain the Plexiglas installation on the carriageway gate, and on appeal the City Council had upheld the Commission's action, the owner filed an appeal with Civil District Court where the Council's action was overturned, allowing the owner to retain the Plexiglas backing. In reference to the City Council appeal regarding 934-42 Bourbon, the VCC action was again upheld by the Council which ordered the owner to work with the staff to obtain permits to do all corrective work within six months. Staff has been working with the owners on permit details.

He also noted progress being made with the Design Guideline committee as it continues to go through the analysis and redrafting of policies and detailed references concerning French Quarter building types. He added that the end result will provide guidance for specific work as well as guidance on long-term, regular maintenance.

Finally, he introduced summer intern Katie McDougal, a recent graduate of Rhodes College in Memphis, whose major project is transferring thousands of the VCC's historic slide and photographic images into usable digital documents that can be easily used in research and in showing what colder conditions had been. Ms. McDougal will start graduate school in the fall but in the meantime she will be a very valuable asset to the VCC staff.

V. NEW BUSINESS

810 Ursulines: Frank R. Sciacca, et al, owners; studio WTA, applicant. Conceptual review of proposal to renovate buildings for use as single-family residence, including installation of glazed enclosure (rear ground floor), new millwork, modification of existing openings, creation of new openings, application of stucco to exposed masonry, and reconstruction of existing carriageway infill, per materials received 04/08/14 & 05/19/14, respectively.

[Mrs. Denechaud entered during the staff presentation]

Mr. McLeod made the staff report with Mr. Karsen present to on behalf of the applicant. Following the presentation and with no additional discussion, Mr. Taylor moved, Mrs. Denechaud seconded, to **conceptually approve** the proposal as submitted, with the understanding that a legally binding covenant or deed restriction must be established in order to permit the glazed enclosure of exterior space, with the applicant to return to the Architecture Committee for further design development review. The motion passed unanimously.

1226 Dauphine: Dr. Alan Santos, owner; Charles A. Berg, AIA, architect/applicant. Conceptual review of proposal to construct addition to rear of building, per application & materials received 04/10/14 & 05/10/14, respectively.

Ms. Ripple gave the staff presentation with Mr. Berg in attendance as applicant. Mr. Musso noted that Mr. Berg has been very gracious in responding to the Architectural Committee's requests for design revisions, evident in the conceptual design being reviewed. With little further discussion, Mr. Lyons moved, Mrs. Stokes seconded, to grant **conceptual approval** consistent with staff analysis and recommendations of 06/04/14. The motion passed unanimously.

821 Dauphine: AAA Dauphine House, LLC, owner; James Cripps, architect/applicant. Conceptual proposal to **demolish** detached, rear structure, and to construct a new building, per application & materials received 04/22/14 & 05/12/14, respectively. [**Note: this meeting marks the beginning of the 30-day layover**]

Mr. McLeod made the staff report with Mr. Cripps present on behalf of the application. Discussion centered on the historic/architectural rating of the rear structure on the property and whether or not a changing the rating of the building would be appropriate. Mr. Hesdorffer noted that the prescribed 30-day layover has been a standard VCC policy for many years for the purpose of allowing analysis to take place before considering any demolition. The rationale has been for the Commission to be certain that a building's history and conditions can be fully understood and assessed prior to making the decision to allow demolition. Mr. Taylor then moved, Mrs. Denechaud seconded, to **begin the 30-day layover period** for the proposed demolition. The motion carried unanimously.

417 Royal: New Brennans Co., LLC, owner; John C. Williams, applicant. Review of proposed revisions to approved plans, per materials received 05/05/14 & 05/20/14.

Ms. Ripple gave the staff presentation with Mr. Williams representing the application. Requiring no further discussion, Mr. Taylor moved, Mr. Blanda seconded, for **conceptual approval** of the proposed revisions, consistent with the staff analysis and recommendations of 06/04/14. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. CHANGE OF USE HEARINGS

1240 Decatur: James & Richard Realty, owner; Morris Kahn, applicant. Proposal to install signage in conjunction with a **change of use** from *vacant* to *restaurant*, per application received 04/09/14.

Ms. Ripple presented the staff report with Mr. Kahn representing the application. Finding no objection to the proposal, Mrs. Denechaud moved, Mr. Blanda seconded, for **approval** of the relocation of the signage, in conjunction with a recommendation to the Director of the Dept. of Safety and Permits to also **approve** the proposed **change of use** from *vacant* from *restaurant*, with the added contingency that all outstanding violations be corrected and/or resolved. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Consideration of authorizing staff-level approvals for policy-guided, lighting proposals that clearly conform to the recently adopted lighting guidelines

In order to shorten the time-frame for review and approval of lighting applications, subject to the lighting policy adopted in November, 2013, Mr. Taylor moved, Mr. Henriquez seconded, to empower the staff to conduct administrative reviews and to issue permits for lighting

installations that conform to the policy. It was also stated that if there are any concerns or questions regarding any such proposal, the staff is always free to refer any application to the Architectural Committee for review and action. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Consideration of proposal to construct a new pier and walkway from the river's edge, adjacent to the Moonwalk, to include the Vanilla Sky Café and a helium balloon ride concession (NOTE: public comment being sought by the US Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Louisiana, Dept. of Environmental Quality)

Mr. Musso noted that the proposal, situated in the river then actually falls outside the land boundary under the jurisdiction of the Commission. Mr. Hesdorffer noted that the VCC is certainly able to offer comment to the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, the agencies which issued a request for public comment. He outlined the general aspects of the proposed commercial development on the Mississippi River in Orleans Parish, also known as the Vanilla Sky Café, LLP, and noted that this proposal would have an effect on the nature of the Vieux Carre as a local historic district as well as a National Historic Landmark. Addressing the VCC were spokespersons representing the Louisiana Landmarks Society (Sandra Stokes) as well as two neighborhood organizations, French Quarter Citizens (Gail Cavett) and Vieux Carre Property Owners, Residents and Associates (Meg Lousteau), as well as Robert Vanlangendonck, speaking a private citizen/resident of the French Quarter.

Discussion centered on the historic significance of the site in proximity to the Vieux Carre Historic District and the negative and detrimental effect such a proposal would have on the appearance and overall character of nearby iconic sites that are part of New Orleans oldest and most treasured neighborhood. Noted were the views and vistas at the location and the inappropriate intrusion that the proposed café platform/helium balloon ride would bring to this location at the river's edge of the Vieux Carre. Furthermore, each articulated safety concerns along what is renowned as one of the most dangerous bends in the Mississippi River and the potential safety hazard to river navigation. Each group asked that their names be included in a joint message of opposition to this proposal.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Mr. Lyons moved, Mrs. Denechaud seconded, that the Vieux Carre Commission **resolve to object** to the proposed development and to formally include the similar opposition views represented by Louisiana Landmarks Society, French Quarter Citizens and Vieux Carre Property Owners, Residents and Associates and that the resolution be directed to the representatives of the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

VIII. RATIFICATION of Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Vieux Carré Commission meeting of May 7, 2014

Mrs. Denechaud moved, Mr. Lyons seconded, to ratify the actions taken by the Architectural Committee and Staff since the Vieux Carré Commission meeting of May 7, 2014. The motion passed unanimously.

With no other business to be considered, Mr. Taylor moved for adjournment. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:40 PM.